



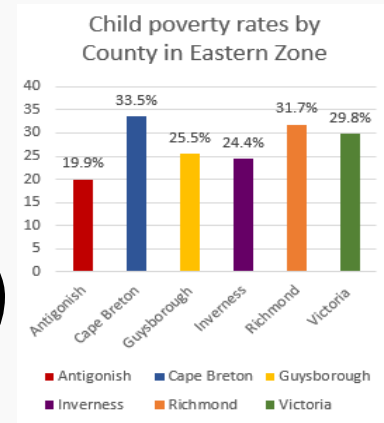
CONNECTING THE DOTS

The connection between poverty and early childhood development



National Child Day is November 20th

National Child Day is celebrated in Canada on November 20 in recognition of our country's commitment to upholding the rights of children. In honour of this day, this infographic will focus on the connection between early childhood development and poverty.



A collaboration between Eastern Zone Community Health Boards and Mental Health and Addictions Health Promotion team.

Poverty & Early Childhood: Stats for Nova Scotia, the Eastern Zone & Indigenous Communities

1 in 4

Children in Nova Scotia live in poverty

1 in 3

Children in Cape Breton live in poverty

1 in 2

and/or higher
Poverty rates are highest in First Nation Communities

Poverty has profound impacts on many aspects of a person's life, that can continue over the life course. It impacts children by interrupting brain development, has later life implications, and, the longer a child lives in poverty, the more likely they will remain living in poverty as an adult.

A promise broken...

In 1989, the Canadian federal government promised to end child poverty by 2000. All parties in the House of Commons voted unanimously to pass this resolution. In the past 30 years, since that promise, the Nova Scotia child poverty rate has only decreased by 0.1 of a percentage point. We need to do better!



Systemic Causes... not the parents' fault

Child poverty is mainly due to causes, or drivers, partially or wholly outside parents' control. These include aspects of

- social security / social safety net
- income from employment
- the costs of living (food, fuel, utilities & housing costs)



If you change the first five years, you change everything...

Interruption in development between the ages of 0-5 have lasting health impacts. 90% of child development happens during the first 5 years of life.

Poverty is trauma

Poverty results in stressful living environments & situations. This leads to toxic (prolonged) stress for not only parents, but children as well.

Poverty is racialized

During 2015, the poverty rate for all children in Nova Scotia was 22.2%. At that same time, the poverty rate for visible minority children (*Statistics Canada's term*) was 37.45%.

Importance of prenatal period...

The stress poverty places on a pregnant person affects the fetus too. Chronic stress due to crowded home environments, unemployment, single-parent households, less social support and financial problems increases risks for early birth, low birth weight, etc.

Return on Investment

For every government dollar spent on early years, \$4.00 - \$8.00 is saved!!



Human Costs

Family difficulties due to poverty are likely to result in the following hardships experienced by children:

- **Poor physical health outcomes** - higher rates of injury, increased exposure to toxins due to inadequate living environments, food insecurity & poor nutrition, dental problems, ongoing chronic health conditions and lack of access to medical care
- **Poor mental health outcomes** - lower self-esteem & self-worth, more suicidal ideation, depression, anxiety, etc.
- **Poor academic achievement** - poor educational and employment opportunities leading to intergenerational poverty
- Children are more likely to be placed in care and involved with the justice system



Basic Income gives people options

Basic income guarantees a minimum income floor, providing security for the most vulnerable.

Given that short-term and part-time jobs are on the rise, basic income is a good way to supplement /augment family income.



What else can YOU do?

- [Join the "Poverty is a Political Choice" Campaign](#)
- [Advocate for Basic Income](#)



- Read the 17 Recommendations in the 2021 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Nova Scotia (see reference below)
- Continue to support programs that put the needs of families in the forefront. Help them to build relationships, foster literacy and reading, enhance time outside, connect them to their neighborhoods and other protective factors
- Invest in safe affordable and toxin free housing (e.g., no mould) for families close to services and amenities
- Continue to invest in early years support e.g., daycares, early years centers, pre-primary and their staff, family resource centers, etc.
- Raise awareness about Early Development Indicators (EDIs) and how this tool can demonstrate how well we are supporting early years development
- Support healthy development by promoting breastfeeding. Breastfeeding is also a source of food security for families living in poverty.

Kudos NS!!

The Government of Nova Scotia is creating an independent Child and Youth Commission that will promote and protect the well-being of children and youth.

Sources:

2021 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Nova Scotia: [2021 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Nova Scotia | Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives](#)

How Poverty Can Follow a Child into Adulthood: [How Poverty Can Follow Children Into Adulthood | FRONTLINE \(pbs.org\)](#)

The Cost of Poverty in the Atlantic Provinces. Canadian Centre on Policy Alternatives: [The Cost of Poverty in the Atlantic Provinces | Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives](#)

Child Poverty Overview: Scotland Public Health: [Impact of child poverty - Child poverty overview - Child poverty - Children - Population groups - Public Health Scotland](#)

[Overview - Human Early Learning Partnership \(ubc.ca\)](#)

[Early Child Development | Canadian Paediatric Society \(cps.ca\)](#)

[Early Development Instrument \(EDI\) | Education and Early Childhood Development \(ednet.ns.ca\)](#)